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FLY LEAVES

Calverley, Charles Stuart

BY C. S. C.

AUTHOR OF "VERSES AND TRANSLATIONS."

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MORNING.

'TIS the hour when white-horsed Day
Chases Night her mares away;
When the Gates of Dawn (they say)
Phœbus opes:
And I gather that the Queen
May be uniformly seen,
Should the weather be serene,
On the slopes.

When the ploughman, as he goes
Leathern-gaitered o'er the snows,
From his hat and from his nose
Knocks the ice;

And the panes are frosted o'er,
And the lawn is crisp and hoar,
As has been observed before
Once or twice.

When, arrayed in breastplate red,
Sings the robin for his bread,
On the elmtree that hath shed
Every leaf;
While, within, the frost benumbs
The still sleepy schoolboy's thumbs,
And in consequence his sums
Come to grief.

But when breakfast-time hath come,
And he's crunching crust and crumb,
He'll no longer look a glum
Little dunce;

But be brisk as bees that settle
On a summer rose's petal:
Wherefore, Polly, put the kettle
On at once.

EVENING.

KATE! if e'er thy light foot lingers
On the lawn, when up the fells
Steals the Dark, and fairy fingers
Close unseen the pimpernels:
When, his thighs with sweetness laden,
From the meadow comes the bee,
And the lover and the maiden
Stand beneath the trysting tree:—

Lingers on, till stars unnumbered
Tremble in the breeze-swept tarn,
And the bat that all day slumbered
Flits about the lonely barn;

And the shapes that shrink from garish
Noon are peopling cairn and lea;
And thy sire is almost bearish
If kept waiting for his tea:—

And the screech-owl scares the peasant
As he skirts some churchyard drear;
And the goblins whisper pleasant
Tales in Miss Rossetti's ear;
Importuning her in strangest
Sweetest tones to buy their fruits:—
O be careful that thou changest,
On returning home, thy boots.

SHELTER.

BY the wide lake's margin I marked her lie—
The wide, weird lake where the alders sigh—
A young fair thing, with a shy, soft eye;
And I deemed that her thoughts had flown
To her home, and her brethren, and sisters dear,
As she lay there watching the dark, deep mere,
All motionless, all alone.

Then I heard a noise, as of men and boys,
And a boisterous troop drew nigh.
Whither now will retreat those fairy feet?

Where hide till the storm pass by?
One glance—the wild glance of a hunted thing—
She cast behind her; she gave one spring;
And there followed a splash and a broadening ring
On the lake where the alders sigh.

She had gone from the ken of ungentle men!
Yet scarce did I mourn for that;
For I knew she was safe in her own home then,
And, the danger past, would appear again,
For she was a water-rat.

IN THE GLOAMING.

IN the Gloaming to be roaming, where the crested
waves are foaming,
And the shy mermaidens combing locks that
ripple to their feet;
Where the Gloaming is, I never made the ghost
of an endeavour
To discover—but whatever were the hour, it
would be sweet.

"To their feet," I say, for Leech's sketch indis-
putably teaches
That the mermaids of our beaches do not end
in ugly tails,

Nor have homes among the corals; but are shod
with neat balmorals,
An arrangement no one quarrels with, as many
might with scales.

Sweet to roam beneath a shady cliff, of course with
some young lady,
Lalage, Neæra, Haidee, or Elaine, or Mary
Ann:
Love, you dear delusive dream you! Very sweet
your victims deem you,
When, heard only by the seamew, they talk
all the stuff one can.

Sweet to haste, a licensed lover, to Miss Pinkerton
the glover,
Having managed to discover what is dear Neæra's
'size':

P'raps to touch that wrist so slender, as your tiny gift you tender,
And to read you're no offender in those laughing hazel eyes.

Then to hear her call you 'Harry,' when she makes you fetch and carry—
O young men about to marry, what a blessed thing it is!
To be photographed—together—cased in pretty Russia leather—
Hear her gravely doubting whether they have spoilt your honest phiz!

Then to bring your plighted fair one first a ring—a rich and rare one—
Next a bracelet, if she'll wear one, and a heap of things beside;

And serenely bending o'er her, to enquire if it would bore her
To say when her own adorer may aspire to call her bride!

Then, the days of courtship over, with your WIFE to start for Dover
Or Dieppe—and live in clover evermore, what-e'er befalls:
For I've read in many a novel that, unless they've souls that grovel,
Folks *prefer* in fact a hovel to your dreary marble halls:

To sit, happy married lovers; Phillis trifling with a plover's
Egg, while Corydon uncovers with a grace the Sally Lunn,

Or dissects the lucky pheasant—that, I think, were
passing pleasant;
As I sit alone at present, dreaming darkly of
a Dun.

THE PALACE.

THEY come, they come, with fife and drum,
And gleaming pikes and glancing banners:
Though the eyes flash, the lips are dumb;
To talk in rank would not be manners.
Onward they stride, as Britons can;
The ladies following in the Van.

Who, who be these that tramp in threes
Through sumptuous Picadilly, through
The roaring Strand, and stand at ease
At last 'neath shadowy Waterloo?
Some gallant Guild, I ween, are they;
Taking their annual holiday.

To catch the destined train—to pay
Their willing fares, and plunge within it—
Is, as in old Romaunt they say,
With them the work of half-a-minute.
Then off they're whirled, with songs and shouting.
To cedared Sydenham for their outing.

I marked them light, with faces bright
As pansies or a new coined florin,
And up the sunless stair take flight,
Close-packed as rabbits in a warren.
Honour the Brave, who in that stress
Still trod not upon Beauty's dress!

Kerchief in hand I saw them stand;
In every kerchief lurked a lunch;
When they unfurled them, it was grand
To watch bronzed men and maidens crunch
The sounding celery-stick, or ram
The knife into the blushing ham.

Dashed the bold fork through pies of pork;
O'er hard-boiled eggs the saltspoon shook;
Leapt from its lair the playful cork:
Yet some there were, to whom the brook
Seemed sweetest beverage, and for meat
They chose the red root of the beet.

Then many a song, some rather long,
Came quivering up from girlish throats;
And one young man he came out strong,
And gave "The Wolf" without his notes.
While they who knew not song or ballad
Still munched, approvingly, their salad.

But ah! what bard could sing how hard,
The artless banquet o'er, they ran
Down the soft slope with daisies starred
And kingcups! onward, maid with man,
They flew, to scale the breezy swing,
Or court frank kisses in the ring.

Such are the sylvan scenes that thrill
  This heart! The lawns, the happy shade,
Where matrons, whom the sunbeams grill,
  Stir with slow spoon their lemonade;
And maidens flirt (no extra charge)
In comfort at the fountain's marge

Others may praise the "grand displays"
  Where "fiery arch," "cascade," and "comet,"
Set the whole garden in a "blaze"!
  Far, at such times, may I be from it;
Though then the public may be "lost
In wonder" at a trifling cost.

Fanned by the breeze, to puff at ease
  My faithful pipe is all I crave:
And if folks rave about the "trees
  Lit up by fireworks," let them rave.
Your monster fêtes, I like not these;
Though they bring grist to the lessees.

PEACE.

A STUDY.

HE stood, a worn-out City clerk—
Who'd toiled, and seen no holiday,
For forty years from dawn to dark—
Alone beside Caermarthen Bay.

He felt the salt spray on his lips;
Heard children's voices on the sands;
Up the sun's path he saw the ships
Sail on and on to other lands;

And laughed aloud. Each sight and sound
To him was joy too deep for tears;
He sat him on the beach, and bound
A blue bandana round his ears:

And thought how, posted near his door,
His own green door on Camden Hill,
Two bands at least, most likely more,
Were mingling at their own sweet will

Verdi with Vance. And at the thought
He laughed again, and softly drew
That Morning Herald that he'd bought
Forth from his breast, and read it through.

THE ARAB.

ON, on, my brown Arab, away, away!
Thou hast trotted o'er many a mile today,
And I trow right meagre hath been thy fare
Since they roused thee at dawn from thy straw-piled lair,
To tread with those echoless unshod feet
Yon weltering flats in the noontide heat,
Where no palmtree proffers a kindly shade
And the eye never rests on a cool grass blade;
And lank is thy flank, and thy frequent cough,
Oh! it goes to my heart—but away, friend, off!

And yet, ah! what sculptor who saw thee stand,
As thou standest now, on thy Native Strand,
With the wild wind ruffling thine uncombed hair,
And thy nostril upturned to the od'rous air,
Would not woo thee to pause, till his skill might
trace
At leisure the lines of that eager face;
The collarless neck and the coal-black paws
And the bit grasped tight in the massive jaws;
The delicate curve of the legs, that seem
Too slight for their burden—and, O, the gleam
Of that eye, so sombre and yet so gay!
Still away, my lithe Arab, once more away!

Nay, tempt me not, Arab, again to stay;
Since I crave neither Echo nor Fun today.
For thy *hand* is not Echoless—there they are,
Fun, Glowworm, and Echo, and Evening Star:
And thou hintest withal that thou fain would'st shine,

As I read them, these bulgy old boots of mine.
But I shrink from thee, Arab! Thou eat'st eel-pie,
Thou evermore hast at least one black eye;
There is brass on thy brow, and thy swarthy hues
Are due not to nature but handling shoes;
And the bit in thy mouth, I regret to see,
Is a bit of tobacco-pipe—Flee, child, flee!

LINES ON HEARING THE ORGAN.

GRINDER, who serenely grindest
At my door the Hundredth Psalm,
Till thou ultimately findest
Pence in thine unwashen palm:

Grinder, jocund-hearted Grinder,
Near whom Barbary's nimble son,
Poised with skill upon his hinder
Paws, accepts the proffered bun:

Dearly do I love thy grinding;
Joy to meet thee on the road
Where thou prowlest through the
Dust with that stupendous load,

'Neath the baleful star of Sirius,
When the postmen slowlier jog,
And the ox becomes delirious,
And the muzzle decks the dog.

Tell me by what art thou bindest
On thy feet those ancient shoon:
Tell me, Grinder, if thou grindest
Always, always out of tune.

Tell me if, as thou art buckling
On thy straps with eager claws,
Thou forecastest, inly chuckling,
All the rage that thou will cause.

Tell me if at all thou mindest
When folks flee, as if on wings,
From thee as at ease thou grindest:
Tell me fifty thousand things.

Grinder, gentle-hearted Grinder!
Ruffians who led evil lives,
Soothed by thy sweet strains are kinder
To their bullocks and their wives:

Children, when they see thy supple
Form approach, are out like shots;
Half-a-bar sets several couple
Waltzing in convenient spots;

Not with clumsy Jacks or Georges:
Unprofaned by grasp of man
Maidens speed those simple orgies,
Betsey Jane with Betsey Ann.

As they love thee in St. Giles's
Thou art loved in Grosvenor Square
None of those engaging smiles is
Unreciprocated there.

Often, ere thou yet hast hammered
Through thy four delicious airs,
Coins are flung thee by enamoured
Housemaids upon area stairs:

E'en the ambrosial-whiskered flunkey
Eyes thy boots and thine unkempt
Beard and melancholy monkey
More in pity than contempt.

Far from England, in the sunny
South, where Anio leaps in foam,
Thou wast reared, till lack of money
Drew thee from thy vineclad home:

And thy mate, the sinewy Jocko,
From Brazil or Afric came,
Land of simoom and sirocco—
And he seems extremely tame.

There he quaffed the undefilèd
Spring, or hung with apelike glee,
By his teeth or tail or eyelid,
To the slippery mango-tree:

There he wooed and won a dusky
Bride, of instincts like his own;
Talked of love till he was husky
In a tongue to us unknown:

Side by side 'twas theirs to ravage
The potato-ground, or cut
Down the unsuspecting savage
With the well-aimed cocoa-nut:—

Till the miscreant Stranger tore him
Screaming from his blue-faced fair;
And they flung strange raiment o'er him,
Raiment which he could not bear.

Severed from the pure embraces
Of his children and his spouse,
He must ride fantastic races
Mounted on reluctant sows:

But the heart of wistful Jocko
Still was with his ancient flame
In the nutgroves of Morocco;
Or if not it's all the same.

Grinder, winsome grinsome Grinder!
They who see thee and whose soul
Melts not at thy charms, are blinder
Than a trebly-bandaged mole:

They to whom thy curt (yet clever)
Talk, thy music and thine ape,
Seem not to be joys for ever,
Are but brutes in human shape.

'Tis not that thy mien is stately,
'Tis not that thy tones are soft;
'Tis not that I care so greatly
For the same thing played so oft.

But I've heard mankind abuse thee;
And perhaps it's rather strange,
But I thought that I would choose thee
For encomium, as a change.

CHANGED.

I KNOW not why my soul is racked:
Why I ne'er smile as was my wont:
I only know that, as a fact,
I don't.

I used to roam o'er glen and glade
Buoyant and blithe as other folk:
And not unfrequently I made
A joke.

A minstrel's fire within me burned.
I'd sing, as one whose heart must break,
Lay upon lay: I nearly learned
To shake.

All day I sang; of love, of fame,
Of fights our fathers fought of yore,
Until the thing almost became
A bore.

I cannot sing the old songs now!
It is not that I deem them low;
'Tis that I can't remember how
They go.
I could not range the hills till high
Above me stood the summer moon:
And as to dancing, I could fly
As soon.

The sports, to which with boyish glee
I sprang erewhile, attract no more;
Although I am but sixty-three
Or four.

Nay, worse than that, I've seemed of late
To shrink from happy boyhood—boys
Have grown so noisy, and I hate
A noise.

They fright me, when the beech is green,
By swarming up its stem for eggs:
They drive their horrid hoops between
My legs:—
It's idle to repine, I know;
I'll tell you what I'll do instead:
I'll drink my arrowroot, and go
To bed.

FIRST LOVE.

O MY earliest love, who, ere I numbered
Ten sweet summers, made my bosom thrill!
Will a swallow—or a swift, or some bird—
Fly to her and say, I love her still?

Say my life's a desert drear and arid,
To its one green spot I aye recur:
Never, never—although three times married—
Have I cared a jot for aught but her.

No, mine own! though early forced to leave you,
Still my heart was there where first we met;
In those "Lodgings with an ample sea-view,"
Which were, forty years ago, "To Let."

There I saw her first, our landlord's oldest
Little daughter. On a thing so fair
Thou, O Sun,—who (so they say) beholdest
Everything,—hast gazed, I tell thee, ne'er.

There she sat—so near me, yet remoter
Than a star—a blue-eyed bashful imp:
On her lap she held a happy bloater,
'Twixt her lips a yet more happy shrimp.

And I loved her, and our troth we plighted
On the morrow by the shingly shore:
In a fortnight to be disunited
By a bitter fate for evermore.

O my own, my beautiful, my blue-eyed!
To be young once more, and bite my thumb
At the world and all its cares with you, I'd
Give no inconsiderable sum.

Hand in hand we tramped the golden seaweed,
Soon as o'er the gray cliff peeped the dawn:
Side by side, when came the hour for tea, we'd
Crunch the mottled shrimp and hairy prawn:—

Has she wedded some gigantic shrimper,
That sweet mite with whom I loved to play?
Is she girt with babes that whine and whimper,
That bright being who was always gay?

Yes—she has at least a dozen wee-things!
Yes—I see her darning corduroys,
Scouring floors, and setting out the teathings,
For a howling herd of hungry boys,

In a home that reeks of tar and sperm-oil!
But at intervals she thinks, I know,
Of these days which we, afar from turmoil,
Spent together forty years ago.

O my earliest love, still unforgotten,
With your downcast eyes of dreamy blue!
Never, somehow, could I seem to cotton
To another as I did to you!

WANDERERS.

AS o'er the hill we roamed at will,
My dog and I together,
We marked a chaise, by two bright
Slow-moved along the heather:

Two bays arch-necked, with tails erect
And gold upon their blinkers;
And by their side an ass I spied;
It was a travelling tinker's.

The chaise went by, nor aught cared I;
Such things are not in my way:
I turned me to the tinker, who
Was loafing down a by-way:

I asked him where he lived—a stare
Was all I got in answer,
As on he trudged: I rightly judged
The stare said "Where I can, Sir."

I asked him if he'd take a whiff
Of 'bacco; he acceded;
He grew communicative too,
(A pipe was all he needed,)
Till of the tinker's life I think
I knew as much as he did.

"I loiter down by thorp and town;
For any job I'm willing;
Take here and there a dusty brown,
And here and there a shilling.

"I deal in every ware in turn,
I've rings for buddin' Sally
That sparkle like those eyes of her'n;
I've liquor for the valet.

"I steal from th' parson's strawberry-plots,
I hide by th' squire's covers;
I teach the sweet young housemaids what's
The art of trapping lovers.

"The things I've done 'neath moon and stars
Have got me into messes;
I've seen the sky through prison bars,
I've torn up prison dresses:

"I've sat, I've sighed, I've gloomed, I've glanced
With envy at the swallows
That through the window slid, and danced
(Quite happy) round the gallows:

"But out again I come, and shew
My face nor care a stiver;
For trades are brisk and trades are slow,
But mine goes on for ever."

Thus on he prattled like a babbling brook.
Then I, "The sun has slipt behind the hill,
And my aunt Vivian dines at half-past six."
So in all love we parted; I to the Hall,
They to the village. It was noised next noon
That chickens had been missed at Syllabub Farm.

SAD MEMORIES.

THEY tell me I am beautiful: they praise my
silken hair,
My little feet that silently slip on from stair to
stair:
They praise my pretty trustful face and innocent
gray eye;
Fond hands caress me oftentimes, yet would that
I might die!

Why was I born to be abhorred of man and bird
and beast?
The bulfinch marks me stealing by, and straight his
song hath ceased;

The shrewmouse eyes me shudderingly, then flees;
and worse than that,
The housedog he flees after me—why was I born
a cat?

Men prize the heartless hound who quits dry-eyed
his native land;
Who wags a mercenary tail and licks a tyrant
hand.
The leal true cat they prize not, that if e'er com-
pelled to roam
Still flies, when let out of the bag, precipitately
home.

They call me cruel. Do I know if mouse or song-
bird feels?
I only know they make me light and salutary meals:
And if, as 'tis my nature to, ere I devour I tease
'em,

Why should a low-bred gardener's boy pursue me
with a besom?

Should china fall or chandeliers, or anything but
stocks—

Nay stocks, when they're in flowerpots—the cat
expects hard knocks:

Should ever anything be missed—milk, coals, um-
brellas, brandy—

The cat's pitched into with a boot or any thing
that's handy.

I remember, I remember, how one night I fleeted
by,

And gained the blessed tiles and gazed into the
cold clear sky.

I remember, I remember, how my various lovers
came;

And there, beneath the crescent moon, played many
a little game.

They fought—by good St. Catharine, 'twas a fearsome sight to see
The coal-black crest, the glowering orbs, of one gigantic He.
Like bow by some tall bowman bent at Hastings or Poictiers,
His huge back curved, till none observed a vestige of his ears:

He stood, an ebon crescent, flouting yon ivory moon;
Then raised the pibroch of his race, the Song without a Tune:
Gleamed his white teeth, his mammoth tail waved darkly to and fro,
As with one complex yell he burst, all claws, upon the foe.

It thrills me now, that final Miaow—that weird unearthly din:

Lone maidens heard it far away, and leaped out
of their skin.
A potboy from his den o'erhead peeped with a
scared wan face;
Then sent a random brickbat down, which knocked
me into space.

Nine days I fell, or thereabouts: and, had we not
nine lives,
I wis I ne'er had seen again thy sausage-shop,
St. Ives!
Had I, as some cats have, nine tails, how gladly
I would lick
The hand, and person generally, of him who heaved
that brick!

For me they fill the milkbowl up, and cull the
choice sardine:
But ah! I nevermore shall be the cat I once have
been!

The memories of that fatal night they haunt me
even now:
In dreams I see that rampant He, and tremble at
that Miaow.

COMPANIONS.

A TALE OF A GRANDFATHER.

I KNOW not of what we pondered
Or made pretty pretence to talk,
As, her hand within mine, we wandered
Tow'rd the pool by the limetree walk,
While the dew fell in showers from the passion flowers
And the blush-rose bent on her stalk.

I cannot recall her figure:
Was it régal as Juno's own?
Or only a trifle bigger
Than the elves who surround the throne
Of the Faëry Queen, and are seen, I ween,
By mortals in dreams alone?

What her eyes were like I know not:
Perhaps they were blurred with tears;
And perhaps in yon skies there glow not
(On the contrary) clearer spheres.
No! as to her eyes I am just as wise
As you or the cat, my dears.

Her teeth, I presume, were "pearly":
But which was she, brunette or blonde?
Her hair, was it quaintly curly,
Or as straight as a beadle's wand?
That I failed to remark;—it was rather dark
And shadowy round the pond.

Then the hand that reposed so snugly
In mine—was it plump or spare?
Was the countenance fair or ugly?
Nay, children, you have me there!
My eyes were p'rhaps blurred; and besides I'd heard
That it's horribly rude to stare.

And I—was I brusque and surly?
Or oppressively bland and fond?
Was I partial to rising early?
Or why did we twain abscond,
When nobody knew, from the public view
To prowl by a misty pond?

What passed, what was felt or spoken—
Whether anything passed at all—
And whether the heart was broken
That beat under that shelt'ring shawl—
(If shawl she had on, which I doubt)—has gone,
Yes, gone from me past recall.

Was I haply the lady's suitor?
Or her uncle? I can't make out—
Ask your governess, dears, or tutor.
For myself, I'm in hopeless doubt
As to why we were there, who on earth we were,
And what this is all about.

BALLAD.

THE auld wife sat at her ivied door,
(Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese)
A thing she had frequently done before;
And her spectacles lay on her aproned knees.

The piper he piped on the hill-top high,
(Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese)
Till the cow said "I die," and the goose asked "Why;"
And the dog said nothing, but searched for fleas.

The farmer he strode through the square farmyard;
(Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese)
His last brew of alé was a trifle hard—
The connexion of which with the plot one sees.

The farmer's daughter hath frank blue eyes;
(Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese)
She hears the rooks caw in the windy skies,
As she sits at her lattice and shells her peas.

The farmer's daughter hath ripe red lips;
(Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese)
If you try to approach her, away she skips
Over tables and chairs with apparent ease.

The farmer's daughter hath soft brown hair;
(Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese)
And I met with a ballad, I can't say where,
Which wholly consisted of lines like these.

PART II.

She sat with her hands 'neath her dimpled cheeks,
(Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese)
And spake not a word. While a lady speaks
There is hope, but she didn't even sneeze.

She sat, with her hands 'neath her crimson cheeks;
(Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese)
She gave up mending her father's breeks,
And let the cat roll in her best chemise.

She sat, with her hands 'neath her burning cheeks,
(Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese)
And gazed at the piper for thirteen weeks;
Then she followed him out o'er the misty leas.

Her sheep followed her, as their tails did them.
(Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese)
And this song is considered a perfect gem,
And as to the meaning, it's what you please.

PRECIOUS STONES.

AN INCIDENT IN MODERN HISTORY.

MY Cherrystones! I prize them,
No tongue can tell how much!
Each lady caller eyes them,
And madly longs to touch!
At eve I lift them down, I look
Upon them, and I cry;
Recalling how my Prince 'partook'
(Sweet word!) of cherry-pie!

To me it was an Era
In life, that Dejeuner!
They ate, they sipped Madeira
Much in the usual way.

Many a soft item there would be,
No doubt, upon the carte:
But one made life a heaven to me:
It was the cherry-tart.

Lightly the spoonfuls entered
That mouth on which the gaze
Of ten fair girls was centred
In rapturous amaze.
Soon that august assemblage cleared
The dish; and—as they ate—
The stones, all coyly, reappeared
On each illustrious plate.

And when His Royal Highness
Withdrew to take the air,
Waiving our natural shyness,
We swooped upon his chair.

Policemen at our garments clutched:
We mocked those feeble powers;
And soon the treasures that had touched
Exalted lips were ours!

One large one—at the moment
It seemed almost divine—
Was got by that Miss Beaumont:
And three, O three, are mine!
Yes! the three stones that rest beneath
Glass, on that plain deal shelf,
Stranger, once dallied with the teeth
Of Royalty itself.

Let Parliament abolish
Churches and States and Thrones:
With reverent hand I'll polish
Still, still my Cherrystones!

A clod—a piece of orangepeel—
An end of a cigar—
Once trod on by a Princely heel,
How beautiful they are!

Years since, I climbed Saint Michael
His Mount:—you 'll all go there
Of course, and those who like 'll
Sit in Saint Michael's Chair:
For there I saw, within a frame,
The pen—O heavens! the pen—
With which a Duke had signed his name,
And other gentlemen.

"Great among geese," I faltered,
"Is she who grew that quill!"
And, Deathless Bird, unaltered
Is mine opinion still.

Yet sometimes, as I view my three
Stones with sweet thoughtful brow,
I think there possibly might be
E'en greater geese than thou.

DISASTER.

'TWAS ever thus from childhood's hour!
My fondest hopes would not decay:
I never loved a tree or flower
Which was the first to fade away!
The garden, where I used to delve
Short-frocked, still yields me pinks in plenty:
The peartree that I climbed at twelve
I see still blossoming, at twenty.

I never nursed a dear gazelle.
But I was given a parroquet—
How I did nurse him if unwell!
He's imbecile, but lingers yet.

He's green, with an enchanting tuft;
He melts me with his small black eye:
He'd look inimitable stuffed,
And knows it—but he will not die!

I had a kitten—I was rich
In pets—but all too soon my kitten
Became a full-sized cat, by which
I've more than once been scratched and bitten
And when for sleep her limbs she curled
One day beside her untouched plateful,
And glided calmly from the world,
I freely own that I was grateful.

And then I bought a dog—a queen!
Ah Tiny, dear departing pug!
She lives, but she is past sixteen
And scarce can crawl across the rug.

I loved her beautiful and kind;
  Delighted in her pert Bow-wow:
But now she snaps if you don't mind:
  'Twere lunacy to love her now.

I used to think, should e'er mishap
  Betide my crumple-visaged Ti,
In shape of prowling thief, or trap,
  Or coarse bullterrier—I should die.
But ah! disasters have their use;
  And life might e'en be too sunshiny:
Nor would I make myself a goose,
  If some big dog should swallow Tiny.

CONTENTMENT.

AFTER THE MANNER OF HORACE.

FRIEND, there be they on whom mishap
  Or never or so rarely comes,
That, when they think thereof, they snap
    Derisive thumbs:

And there be they who lightly lose
  Their all, yet feel no aching void;
Should aught annoy them, they refuse
    To be annoyed:

And fain would I be e'en as these!
  Life is with such all beer and skittles;
They are not difficult to please
    About their victuals:

The trout, the grouse, the early pea,
By such, if there, are freely taken;
If not, they munch with equal glee
Their bit of bacon:

And when they wax a little gay
And chaff the public after luncheon,
If they're confronted with a stray
Policeman's truncheon,

They gaze thereat with outstretched necks,
And laughter which no threats can smother,
And tell the horror-stricken X
That he's another.

In snowtime if they cross a spot
Where unsuspected boys have slid,
They fall not down—though they would not
Mind if they did:

When the spring rosebud which they wear
  Breaks short and tumbles from its stem,
No thought of being angry e'er
    Dawns upon them;

Though 'twas Jemima's hand that placed,
  (As well you ween) at evening's hour,
In the loved buttonhole that chaste
    And cherished flower.

And when they travel, if they find
  That they have left their pocket-compass
Or Murray or thick boots behind,
    They raise no rumpus,

But plod serenely on without:
  Knowing it's better to endure
The evil which beyond all doubt
    You cannot cure.

When for that early train they're late,
They do not make their woes the text
Of sermons in the Times, but wait
On for the next;

And jump inside, and only grin
Should it appear that that dry
The guard, omitted to put in
Their carpet-bag.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

ABROAD WITH HIS SON.

O WHAT harper could worthily harp it,
Mine Edward! this wide-stretching wold
(Look out *wold*) with its wonderful carpet
Of emerald, purple, and gold!
Look well at it—also look sharp, it
Is getting so cold.

The purple is heather (*erica*);
The yellow, gorse—called sometimes "whin."
Cruel boys on its prickles might spike a
Green beetle as if on a pin.
You may roll in it, if you would like a
Few holes in your skin.

You wouldn't? Then think of how kind you
Should be to the insects who crave
Your compassion—and then, look behind you
At yon barley-ears! Don't they look brave
As they undulate—(*undulate,* mind you,
From *unda, a wave.*)

The noise of those sheep-bells, how faint it
Sounds here—(on account of our height)!
And this hillock itself—who could paint it,
With its changes of shadow and light?
Is it not—(never, Eddy, say "ain't it")—
A marvellous sight?

Then yon desolate eerie morasses,
The haunts of the snipe and the hern—
(I shall question the two upper classes
On *aquatiles,* when we return)—
Why, I see on them absolute masses
Of *filix* or fern.

How it interests e'en a beginner
(Or tiro) like dear little Ned!
Is he listening? As I am a sinner
He's asleep—he is wagging his head.
Wake up! I'll go home to my dinner,
And you to your bed.

The boundless ineffable prairie;
The splendour of mountain and lake
With their hues that seem ever to vary;
The mighty pine forests which shake
In the wind, and in which the unwary
May tread on a snake;

And this wold with its heathery garment—
Are themes undeniably great.
But—although there is not any harm in't—
It's perhaps little good to dilate
On their charms to a dull little varmint
Of seven or eight.

ARCADES AMBO.

WHY are ye wandering aye 'twixt porch and porch,
Thou and thy fellow—when the pale stars fade
At dawn, and when the glowworm lights her torch,
O Beadle of the Burlington Arcade?
—Who asketh why the Beautiful was made?
A wan cloud drifting o'er the waste of blue,
The thistledown that floats above the glade,
The lilac-blooms of April—fair to view,
And naught but fair are these; and such, I ween, are you.

Yes, ye are beautiful. The young street boys
Joy in your beauty. Are ye there to bar
Their pathway to that paradise of toys,
Ribbons and rings? Who 'll blame ye if ye are?
Surely no shrill and clattering crowd should mar
The dim aisle's stillness, where in noon's mid-glow
Trip fair-haired girls to boot-shop or bazaar;
Where, at soft eve, serenely to and fro
The sweet boy-graduates walk, nor deem the pastime slow.

And Oh! forgive me, Beadles, if I paid
Scant tribute to your worth, when first ye stood
Before me robed in broadcloth and brocade
And all the nameless grace of Beadlehood!
I would not smile at ye—if smile I could

Now as erewhile, ere I had learned to sigh:
Ah, no! I know ye beautiful and good,
And evermore will pause as I pass by,
And gaze, and gazing think, how base a thing
am I.

WAITING.

"O COME, O come," the mother prayed
And hushed her babe: "let me behold
Once more thy stately form arrayed
Like autumn woods in green and gold!

"I see thy brethren come and go;
Thy peers in stature, and in hue
Thy rivals. Some like monarchs glow
With richest purple: some are blue

"As skies that tempt the swallow back;
Or red as, seen o'er wintry seas,
The star of storm; or barred with black
And yellow, like the April bees.

"Come they and go! I heed not, I.
Yet others hail their advent, cling
All trustful to their side, and fly
Safe in their gentle piloting

"To happy homes on heath or hill,
By park or river. Still I wait
And peer into the darkness: still
Thou com'st not—I am desolate.

"Hush! hark! I see a towering form!
From the dim distance slowly rolled
It rocks like lilies in a storm,
And O its hues are green and gold:

"It comes, it comes! Ah rest is sweet,
And there is rest, my babe, for us!"
She ceased, as at her very feet
Stopped the St. John's Wood omnibus.

PLAY.

PLAY, play, while as yet it is day:
While the sweet sunlight is warm on the brae!
Hark to the lark singing lay upon lay,
While the brown squirrel eats nuts on the spray
And in the apple-leaves chatters the jay!
Play, play, even as they!
What though the cowslips ye pluck will decay,
What though the grass will be presently hay?
What though the noise that ye make should dismay
Old Mrs. Clutterbuck over the way?
Play, play, for your locks will grow gray;
Even the marbles ye sport with are clay.

Play, ay in the crowded highway:
Was it not made for you? Yea, my lad, yea.
True that the babes you were bid to convey
Home may fall out or be stolen or stray;
True that the tip-cat you toss about may
Strike an old gentleman, cause him to sway,
Stumble, and p'raps be run o'er by a dray:
Still why delay? Play, my son, play!
Barclay and Perkins, not you, have to pay.

Play, play, your sonatas in A,
Heedless of what your next neighbour may say!
Dance and be gay as a faun or a fay,
Sing like the lad in the boat on the bay;
Sing, play—if your neighbours inveigh
Feebly against you, they're lunatics, eh?
Bang, twang, clatter and clang,
Strum, thrum, upon fiddle and drum;

Neigh, bray, simply obey
All your sweet impulses, stop not or stay!
Rattle the 'bones,' hit a tinbottomed tray
Hard with the fireshovel, hammer away!
Is not your neighbour your natural prey?
Should he confound you, it's only in play.

LOVE.

CANST thou love me, lady?
I've not learned to woo:
Thou art on the shady
Side of sixty too.
Still I love thee dearly!
Thou hast lands and pelf:
But I love thee merely
Merely for thyself.

Wilt thou love me, fairest?
Though thou art not fair;
And I think thou wearest
Someone-else's hair.

Thou could'st love, though, dearly:
And, as I am told,
Thou art very nearly
Worth thy weight, in gold.

Dost thou love me, sweet one?
Tell me that thou dost!
Women fairly beat one,
But I think thou must.
Thou art loved so dearly:
I am plain, but then
Thou (to speak sincerely)
Art as plain again.

Love me, bashful fairy!
I've an empty purse:
And I've "moods," which vary;
Mostly for the worse.

Still, I love thee dearly:
  Though I make (I feel)
Love a little queerly,
  I'm as true as steel.

Love me, swear to love me
  (As, you know, they do)
By yon heaven above me
  And its changeless blue.
Love me, lady, dearly,
  If you'll be so good;
Though I don't see clearly
  On what ground you should.

Love me—ah or love me
  Not, but be my bride!
Do not simply shove me
  (So to speak) aside!

P'raps it would be dearly
  Purchased at the price;
But a hundred yearly
  Would be very nice.

THOUGHTS AT A RAILWAY STATION.

'TIS but a box, of modest deal;
Directed to no matter where:
Yet down my cheek the teardrops steal—
Yes, I am blubbering like a seal;
For on it is this mute appeal,
"*With care.*"

I am a stern cold man, and range
Apart: but those vague words "*With care*"
Wake yearnings in me sweet as strange:
Drawn from my moral Moated Grange,
I feel I rather like the change
Of air.

Hast thou ne'er seen rough pointsmen spy
  Some simple English phrase—"*With care*"
Or "*This side uppermost*"—and cry
Like children? No? No more have I.
Yet deem not him whose eyes are dry
  A bear.

But ah! what treasure hides beneath
  That lid so much the worse for wear?
A ring perhaps—a rosy wreath—
A photograph by Vernon Heath—
Some matron's temporary teeth
  Or hair!

Perhaps some seaman, in Peru
  Or Ind, hath stowed herein a rare
Cargo of birds' eggs for his Sue;
With many a vow that he'll be true,
And many a hint that she is too
  Too fair.

Perhaps—but wherefore vainly pry
Into the page that's folded there?
I shall be better by and bye:
The porters, as I sit and sigh,
Pass and repass—I wonder why
They stare!

ON THE BRINK.

I WATCHED her as she stooped to pluck
A wildflower in her hair to twine;
And wished that it had been my luck
To call her mine.

Anon I heard her rate with mad
Mad words her babe within its cot;
And felt particularly glad
That it had not.

I knew (such subtle brains have men)
That she was uttering what she shouldn't;
And thought that I would chide, and then
I thought I wouldn't:

Few could have gazed upon that face,
Those pouting coral lips, and chided:
A Rhadamanthus, in my place,
Had done as I did:

For wrath with which our bosoms glow
Is chained there oft by Beauty's spell;
And, more than that, I did not know
The widow well.

So the harsh phrase passed unreproved.
Still mute—(O brothers, was it sin?)—
I drank, unutterably moved,
Her beauty in:

And to myself I murmured low,
As on her upturned face and dress
The moonlight fell, 'would she say No
By chance, or Yes?'

She stood so calm, so like a ghost
  Betwixt me and that magic moon,
That I already was almost
    A finished coon

But when she caught adroitly up
  And soothed with smiles her little daughter;
And gave it, if I'm right, a sup
    Of barley-water;

And, crooning still the strange sweet lore
  Which only mothers' tongues can utter,
Snowed with deft hand the sugar o'er
    Its bread-and-butter;

And kissed it clingingly—(Ah, why
  Don't women do these things in private?)—
I felt that if I lost her, I
    Should not survive it:

And from my mouth the words nigh flew—
The past, the future, I forgat 'em:
"O! if you'd kiss me as you do
That thankless atom!"

But this thought came ere yet I spake,
And froze the sentence on my lips:
"They err, who marry wives that make
Those little slips."

It came like some familiar rhyme,
Some copy to my boyhood set;
And that's perhaps the reason I'm
Unmarried yet.

Would she have owned how pleased she was,
And told her love with widow's pride?
I never found out that, because
I never tried.

Be kind to babes and beasts and birds:

Hearts may be hard, though lips are coral;

And angry words are angry words:

And that's the moral.

"FOREVER."

FOREVER! 'Tis a single word!
Our rude forefathers deemed it two:
Can you imagine so absurd
A view?

Forever! What abysms or woe
The word reveals, what frenzy, what
Despair! For ever (printed so)
Did not.

It looks, ah me! how trite and tame!
It fails to sadden or appal
Or solace—it is not the same
At all.

O thou to whom it first occurred
To solder the disjoined, and dower
Thy native language with a word
Of power:

We bless thee! Whether far or near
Thy dwelling, whether dark or fair
Thy kingly brow, is neither here
Nor there.

But in men's hearts shall be thy throne,
While the great pulse of England beats:
Thou coiner of a word unknown
To Keats!

And nevermore must printer do
As men did longago; but run
"For" into "ever," bidding two
Be one.

Forever! passion-fraught, it throws
O'er the dim page a gloom, a glamour:
It's sweet, it's strange; and I suppose
It's grammar.

Forever! 'Tis a single word!
And yet our fathers deemed it two:
Nor am I confident they erred;
Are you?

UNDER THE TREES.

"UNDER the trees!" Who but agrees
That there is magic in words such as these?
Promptly one sees shake in the breeze
Stately lime-avenues haunted of bees:
Where, looking far over buttercupped leas,
Lads and "fair shes" (that is Byron, and he's
An authority) lie very much at their ease;
Taking their teas, or their duck and green peas,
Or, if they prefer it, their plain bread and cheese:
Not objecting at all though it's rather a squeeze
And the glass is I daresay at 80 degrees.
Some get up glees, and are mad about Ries
And Sainton, and Tamberlik's thrilling high *Cs;

Or if painter, hold forth upon Hunt and Maclise,
And the tone and the breadth of that landscape
of Lee's;
Or if learned, on nodes and the moon's apogees,
Or, if serious, on something of AKHB's,
Or the latest attempt to convert the Chaldees;
Or in short about all things, from earthquakes to
fleas.

Some sit in twos or (less frequently) threes,
With their innocent lambswool or book on their
knees,
And talk, and enact, any nonsense you please,
As they gaze into eyes that are blue as the seas;
And you hear an occasional "Harry, don't tease"
From the sweetest of lips in the softest of keys,
And other remarks, which to me are Chinese.
And fast the time flees; till a ladylike sneeze,
Or a portly papa's more elaborate wheeze,
Makes Miss Tabitha seize on her brown muffatees,

And announce as a fact that it's going to freeze,
And that young people ought to attend to their Ps
And their Qs, and not court every form of disease:
Then Tommy eats up the three last ratifias,
And pretty Louise wraps her robe de cerise
Round a bosom as tender as Widow Machree's,
And (in spite of the pleas of her lorn vis-a-vis)
Goes and wraps up her uncle—a patient of Skey's,
Who is prone to catch chills, like all old Bengalese:—
But at bedtime I trust he'll remember to grease
The bridge of his nose, and preserve his rupees
From the premature clutch of his fond legatees;
Or at least have no fees to pay any M.D.s
For the cold his niece caught sitting under the
Trees.

MOTHERHOOD.

SHE laid it where the sunbeams fall
Unscanned upon the broken wall.
Without a tear, without a groan,
She laid it near a mighty stone,
Which some rude swain had haply cast
Thither in sport, long ages past,
And Time with mosses had o'erlaid,
And fenced with many a tall grassblade,
And all about bid roses bloom
And violets shed their soft perfume.
There, in its cool and quiet bed,
She set her burden down and fled:
Nor flung, all eager to escape,
One glance upon the perfect shape
That lay, still warm and fresh and fair,
But motionless and soundless there.

No human eye had marked her pass
Across the linden-shadowed grass
Ere yet the minster clock chimed seven:
Only the innocent birds of heaven—
The magpie, and the rook whose nest
Swings as the elmtree waves his crest—
And the lithe cricket, and the hoar
And huge-limbed hound that guards the door,
Looked on when, as a summer wind
That, passing, leaves no trace behind,
All unapparelled, barefoot all,
She ran to that old ruined wall,
To leave upon the chill dank earth
(For ah! she never knew its worth)
'Mid hemlock rank, and fern, and ling,
And dews of night, that precious thing!

And there it might have lain forlorn
From morn till eve, from eve to morn:

But that, by some wild impulse led,
The mother, ere she turned and fled
One moment stood erect and high;
Then poured into the silent sky
A cry so jubilant, so strange,
That Alice—as she strove to range
Her rebel ringlets at her glass—
Sprang up and gazed across the grass;
Shook back those curls so fair to see,
Clapped her soft hands in childish glee;
And shrieked—her sweet face all aglow,
Her very limbs with rapture shaking—
"My hen has laid an egg, I know;
"And only hear the noise she's making!"

MYSTERY.

I KNOW not if in other's eyes
She seemed almost divine;
But far beyond a doubt it lies
That she did not in mine.

Each common stone on which she trod
I did not deem a pearl:
Nay it is not a little odd
How I abhorred that girl.

We met at balls and picnics oft,
Or on a drawingroom stair;
My aunt invariably coughed
To warn me she was there:

At croquet I was bid remark
How queenly was her pose,
As with stern glee she drew the dark
Blue ball beneath her toes,

And made the Red fly many a foot:
Then calmly she would stoop,
Smiling an angel smile, to put
A partner through his hoop.

At archery I was made observe
That others aimed more near,
But none so tenderly could curve
The elbow round the ear:

Or if we rode, perhaps she *did*
Pull sharply at the curb;
But then the way in which she slid
From horseback was superb!

She'd throw off odes, again, whose flow
And fire were more than Sapphic;
Her voice was sweet, and very low;
Her singing quite seraphic:

She *was* a seraph, lacking wings.
That much I freely own.
But, it is one of those queer things
Whose cause is all unknown—

(Such are the wasp, the household fly,
The shapes that crawl and curl
By men called centipedes)—that I
Simply abhorred that girl.

* * *

No doubt some mystery underlies
All things which are and which are not:
And 'tis the function of the Wise
Not to expound to us what is what,

But let his consciousness play round
The matter, and at ease evolve
The problem, shallow or profound,
Which our poor wits have failed to solve,

Then tell us blandly we are fools;
Whereof we were aware before:
That truth they taught us at the schools,
And p'raps (who knows?) a little more.

—But why did we two disagree?
Our tastes, it may be, did not dovetail:
All I know is, we ne'er shall be
Hero and heroine of a love-tale.

FLIGHT.

O MEMORY! that which I gave thee
To guard in thy garner yestreen—
Little deeming thou e'er could'st behave thee
Thus basely—hath gone from thee clean!
Gone, fled, as ere autumn is ended
The yellow leaves flee from the oak—
I have lost it for ever, my splendid
Original joke.

What was it? I know I was brushing
My hair when the notion occurred:
I know that I felt myself blushing
As I thought 'How supremely absurd!

'How they'll hammer on floor and on table
'As its drollery dawns on them—how
'They will quote it'—I wish I were able
To quote it just now.

I had thought to lead up conversation
To the subject—it's easily done—
Then let off, as an airy creation
Of the moment, that masterly pun.
Let it off, with a flash like a rocket's;
In the midst of a dazzled conclave,
While I sat, with my hands in my pockets,
The only one grave.

I had fancied young Titterton's chuckles,
And old Bottleby's hearty guffaws
As he drove at my ribs with his knuckles,
His mode of expressing applause:

While Jean Bottleby—queenly Miss Janet—
Drew her handkerchief hastily out,
In fits at my slyness—what can it
Have all been about?

I know 'twas the happiest, quaintest
Combination of pathos and fun:
But I've got no idea—the faintest—
Of what was the actual pun.
I think it was somehow connected
With something I'd recently read—
Or heard—or perhaps recollected
On going to bed.

What *had* I been reading? The Standard:
'Double Bigamy'; 'Speech of the Mayor.'
And later—eh? yes! I meandered
Through some chapters of Vanity Fair.

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How it fuses the grave with the festive!
Yet e'en there, there is nothing so fine—
So playfully, subtly suggestive—
As that joke of mine.

Did it hinge upon 'parting asunder'?
No, I don't part my hair with my brush.
Was the point of it 'hair'? Now I wonder!
Stop a bit—I shall think of it—hush!
There's *hare,* a wild animal—Stuff!
It was something a deal more recondite:
Of that I am certain enough;
And of nothing beyond it.

Hair—*locks!* There are probably many
Good things to be said about those.
Give me time—that's the best guess of any—
'Lock' has several meanings, one knows.
Iron locks—*iron-gray locks*—a 'deadlock'—
That would set up an everyday wit:

Then of course there's the obvious 'wedlock';
But that wasn't it.

No! mine was a joke for the ages;
Full of intricate meaning and pith;
A feast for your scholars and sages—
How it would have rejoiced Sidney Smith!
'Tis such thoughts that ennoble a mortal;
And, singling him out from the herd,
Fling wide immortality's portal—
But what was the word?

Ah me! 'tis a bootless endeavour.
As the flight of a bird of the air
Is the flight of a joke—you will never
See the same one again, you may swear.
'Twas my firstborn, and O how I prized it!
My darling, my treasure, my own!
This brain and none other devised it—
And now it has flown.

ON THE BEACH.

LINES BY A PRIVATE TUTOR.

WHEN the young Augustus Edward
Has reluctantly gone bedward
(He's the urchin I am privileged to teach),
From my left-hand waistcoat pocket
I extract a battered locket
And I commune with it, walking on the beach.

I had often yearned for something
That would love me, e'en a dumb thing;
But such happiness seemed always out of reach:
Little boys are off like arrows
With their little spades and barrows,
When they see me bearing down upon the beach;

And although I'm rather handsome,
Tiny babes, when I would dance 'em
On my arm, set up so horrible a screech
That I pitch them to their nurses
With (I fear me) muttered curses,
And resume my lucubrations on the beach.

And the rabbits won't come nigh me,
And the gulls observe and fly me,
And I doubt, upon my honour, if a leech
Would stick on me as on others,
And I know if I had brothers
They would cut me when we met upon the beach.

So at last I bought this trinket.
For (although I love to think it)
'Twasn't *given* me, with a pretty little speech:
No! I bought it of a pedlar,
Brown and wizened as a medlar,
Who was hawking odds and ends about the beach

But I've managed, very nearly,
To believe that I was dearly
Loved by Somebody, who (blushing like a peach)
Flung it o'er me saying 'Wear it
For my sake'—and, I declare, it
Seldom strikes me that I bought it on the beach.

I can see myself revealing
Unsuspected depths of feeling,
As, in tones that half upbraid and half beseech,
I aver with what delight I
Would give anything—my right eye—
For a souvenir of our stroll upon the beach.

O that eye that never glistened
And that voice to which I've listened
But in fancy, how I dote upon them each!
How, regardless what o'clock it
Is, I pore upon that locket,
Which does not contain her portrait, on the beach!

As if something were inside it
I laboriously hide it,
And a rather pretty sermon you might preach
Upon Fantasy, selecting
For your 'instance' the affecting
Tale of me and my proceedings on the beach.

I depict her, ah, how charming!
I portray myself alarming
Her by swearing I would 'mount the deadly breach,'
Or engage in any scrimmage
For a glimpse of her sweet image,
Or her shadow, or her footprint on the beach.

And I'm ever ever seeing
My imaginary Being,
And I'd rather that my marrowbones should bleach
In the winds, than that a cruel
Fate should snatch from me the jewel
Which I bought for one and sixpence on the beach.

LOVERS, AND A REFLECTION.

IN moss-prankt dells which the sunbeams flatter
(And heaven it knoweth what that may mean;
Meaning, however, is no great matter)
Where woods are a-tremble, with rifts atween;

Thro' God's own heather we wonned together,
I and my Willie (O love my love):
I need hardly remark it was glorious weather,
And flitterbats wavered alow, above:

Boats were curtseying, rising, bowing,
(Boats in that climate are so polite,)
And sands were a ribbon of green endowing,
And O the sundazzle on bark and bight!

Thro' the rare red heather we danced together,
(O love my Willie!) and smelt for flowers:
I must mention again it was gorgeous weather,
Rhymes are so scarce in this world of ours:—

By rises that flushed with their purple favours,
Thro' becks that brattled o'er grasses sheen,
We walked or waded, we two young shavers,
Thanking our stars we were both so green.

We journeyed in parallels, I and Willie,
In fortunate parallels! Butterflies,
Hid in weltering shadows of daffodilly
Or marjoram, kept making peacock eyes:

Songbirds darted about, some inky
As coal, some snowy (I ween) as curds;
Or rosy as pinks, or as roses pinky—
They reck of no eerie To-come, those birds!

But they skim over bents which the millstream washes,
Or hang in the lift 'neath a white cloud's hem;
They need no parasols, no goloshes;
And good Mrs. Trimmer she feedeth them.

Then we thrid God's cowslips (as erst His heather)
That endowed the wan grass with their golden blooms;
And snapt—(it was perfectly charming weather)—
Our fingers at Fate and her goddess-glooms:

And Willie 'gan sing—(O, his notes were fluty;
Wafts fluttered them out to the white-winged sea)—
Something made up of rhymes that have done much duty,
Rhymes (better to put it) of 'ancientry':

Bowers of flowers encounted showers
In William's carol—(O love my Willie!)
Then he bade sorrow borrow from blithe tomorrow
I quite forget what—say a daffodilly:

A nest in a hollow, "with buds to follow,"
I think occurred next in his nimble strain;
And clay that was "kneaden" of course in Eden—
A rhyme most novel, I do maintain:

Mists, bones, the singer himself, love-stories,
And all least furlable things got "furled;"
Not with any design to conceal their glories,
But simply and solely to rhyme with "world."

* * *

O if billows and pillows and hours and flowers,
And all the brave rhymes of an elder day,

Could be furled together, this genial weather,
And carted, or carried on wafts away,
Nor ever again trotted out—nay me!
How much fewer volumes of verse there'd be!

THE COCK AND THE BULL.

YOU see this pebble-stone? It's a thing I bought
Of a bit of a chit of a boy i' the mid o' the day—
I like to dock the smaller parts-o'-speech,
As we curtail the already cur-tailed cur
(You catch the paronomasia, play o' words?)
Did, rather, i' the pre-Landseerian days.
Well, to my muttons. I purchased the concern,
And clapt it i' my poke, and gave for same
By way, to-wit, of barter or exchange—
'Chop' was my snickering dandiprat's own term—
One shilling and fourpence, current coin o' the realm.
O-n-e one and f-o-u-r four

Pence, one and fourpence—you are with me, Sir?—
What hour it skills not: ten or eleven o' the clock,
One day (and what a roaring day it was!)
In February, eighteen sixty nine,
Alexandrina Victoria, Fidei
Hm—hm—how runs the jargon? being on throne.

Such, sir, are all the facts, succinctly put,
The basis or substratum—what you will—
Of the impending eighty thousand lines.
"Not much in 'em either," quoth perhaps simple Hodge.
But there's a superstructure. Wait a bit.

Mark first the rationale of the thing:
Hear logic rivel and levigate the deed.
That shilling—and for matter o' that, the pence—
I had o' course upo' me—wi' me say—
(*Mecum*'s the Latin, make a note o' that)

When I popped pen i' stand, blew snout, scratched ear,
Sniffed—tch!—at snuffbox; tumbled up, he-heed,
Haw-hawed (not hee-hawed, that's another guess thing:)
Then fumbled at, and stumbled out of, door,
I shoved the door ope wi' my omoplat;
And *in vestibulo*, i' the entrance-hall,
Donned galligaskins, antigropeloes,
And so forth; and, complete with hat and gloves,
One on and one a-dangle i' my hand,
And ombrifuge (Lord love you!), case o' rain,
I flopped forth, 'sbuddikins! on my own ten toes,
(I do assure you there be ten of them,)
And went clump-clumping up hill and down dale
To find myself o' the sudden i' front o' the boy.
Put case I hadn't 'em on me, could I ha' bought
This sort-o'-kind-o'-what-you-might-call toy,
This pebble-thing, o' the boy-thing? Q. E. D.

That's proven without aid from mumping Pope,
Sleek porporate or bloated Cardinal.
(Isn't it, old Fatchaps? You're in Euclid now.)
So, having the shilling—having i' fact a lot—
And pence and halfpence, ever so many o' them,
I purchased, as I think I said before,
The pebble (*lapis, lapidis, -di, -dem, -de—*
What nouns 'crease short i' the genitive, Fatchaps,
eh?)
O' the boy, a bare-legged beggarly son of a gun,
For one and fourpence. Here we are again.

Now Law steps in, bigwigged, voluminous-jawed;
Investigates, and re-investigates.
Was the transaction illegal? Law shakes head.
Perpend, sir, all the bearings of the case.

At first the coin was mine, the chattel his.
But now (by virtue of the said exchange

And barter) *vice versa* all the coin,
Per juris operationem, vests
I' the boy and his assigns till ding o' doom;
(*In sæcula sæculo-o-o-orum;*
I think I hear the Abate mouth out that.)
To have and hold the same to him and them...
Conver some idiot on Conveyancing.
Whereas the pebble and every part thereof,
And all that appertaineth thereunto,
Or shall, will, may, might, can, could, would, or should,
(*Subaudi cætera*—clap we to the close—
For what's the good of law in a case o' the kind)
Is mine to all intents and purposes.
This settled, I resume the thread o' the tale.

Now for a touch o' the vendor's quality.
He says a gen'lman bought a pebble of him,
(This pebble i' sooth, sir, which I hold i' my hand)—

And paid for't, *like* a gen'lman, on the nail.
'Did I o'ercharge him a ha'penny? 'Devil a bit.
Fiddlestick's end! Get out, you blazing ass!
Gabble o' the goose. Don't bugaboo-baby *me!*
Go double or quits? Yah! tittup! what's the odds?'
—There's the transaction viewed i' the vendor's light.

Next ask that dumpled hag, stood snuffling by,
With her three frowsy blowsy brats o' babes,
The scum o' the kennel, cream o' the filth-heap—
Faugh!
Aie, aie, aie, aie! ὀτοτοτοτοτοῖ,
('Stead which we blurt out Hoighty toighty now)—
And the baker and candlestickmaker, and Jack and Gill,
Bleared Goody this and queasy Gaffer that.
Ask the schoolmaster. Take schoolmaster first.

He saw a gentleman purchase of a lad

A stone, and pay for it *rite*, on the square,
And carry it off *per saltum*, jauntily,
Propria quæ maribus, gentleman's property now
(Agreeably to the law explained above),
In proprium usum, for his private ends.
The boy he chucked a brown i' the air, and bit
I' the face the shilling: heaved a thumping stone
At a lean hen that ran cluck-clucking by,
(And hit her, dead as nail i' post o' door,)
Then *abiit*—what's the Ciceronian phrase?—
Excessit, evasit, erupit—off slogs boy;
Off in three flea-skips. *Hactenus*, so far,
So good, *tam bene*. *Bene, satis, male*,—
Where was I? who said what of one in a quag?
I did once hitch the syntax into verse:
Verbum personale, a verb personal,
Concordat—ay, 'agrees," old Fatchaps—*cum*
Nominativo, with its nominative,
Genere, i' point o' gender, *numero*,

O' number, *et persona,* and person. *Ut,*
Instance: *Sol ruit,* down flops sun, *et* and,
Montes umbrantur, snuffs out mountains. Pah!
Excuse me, sir, I think I'm going mad.
You see the trick on't though, and can yourself
Continue the discourse *ad libitum.*
It takes up about eighty thousand lines,
A thing imagination boggles at:
And might, odds-bobs, sir! in judicious hands,
Extend from here to Mesopotamy.

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